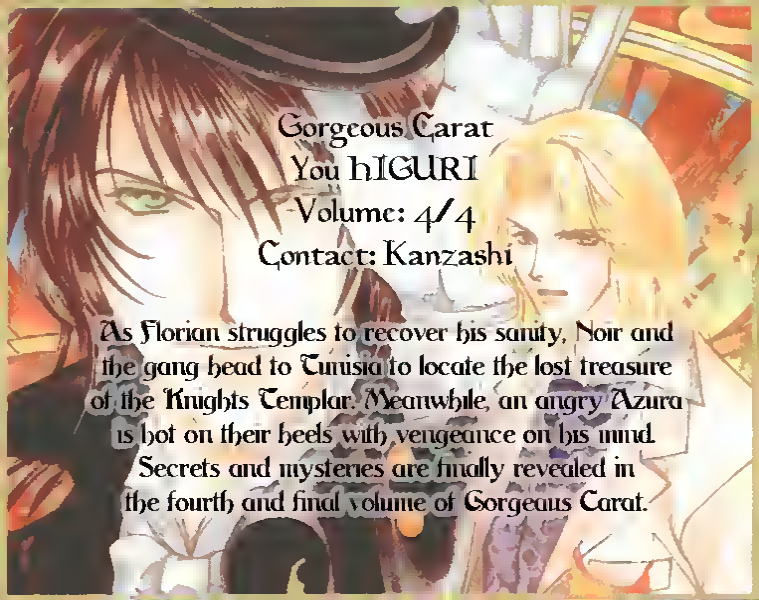
GORGEOUS CARAT

4

YOU HIGURI

青 BLU


Gorgeous Carat
You hIGURI
Volume: 4/4
Contact: Kanzashi
As Florian struggles to recover his sanity, Noir and the gang head to Tunisia to locate the lost treasure of the Knights Templar. Meanwhile, an angry Azura is hot on their heels with vengeance on his mind. Secrets and mysteries are finally revealed in the fourth and final volume of Gorgeous Carat.

YOU HIGURI

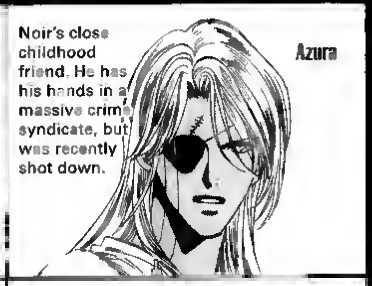
GORGEOUS CARAT

VIRTUE OF DARKNESS

4

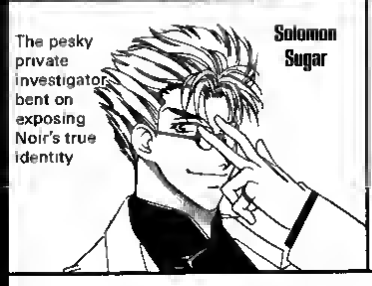
Michel

Despite looking like an exact replica of Noir, he has an intense sense of rivalry



Azura

Noir's close childhood friend. He has his hands in a massive crime syndicate, but was recently shot down.



Solomon Sugar

The pesky private investigator bent on exposing Noir's true identity

Laila

Noir's right-hand woman who adores him

Our story so far...

The Phantom Thief Noir is causing trouble in the city of Paris, when he suddenly receives an invitation from his long-lost childhood friend, Azura, to come to Morocco with his friends. In the public's eye, Noir disguises himself as a sharp loan shark, but Azura has asked him to crack the mystery of the treasure of the Knights Templar.

One unfortunate night, however, Florian discovers that Azura has ties with the crime syndicate, The Black Hand, and is betraying Noir's trust. With their friends held as captives, and Florian fleeing the palace in an opium haze, Noir realizes the betrayal taking place. After a final reunion, Azura is shot down.

Now, with his eyes set on the lost treasure of the Knights Templar, Noir seeks help from his bratty cousin, Michel. Together with the amnesia-ridden Florian and Laila, the group heads to Tunis. It looked as if Noir and company were free of Azura's treacherous grip, but...

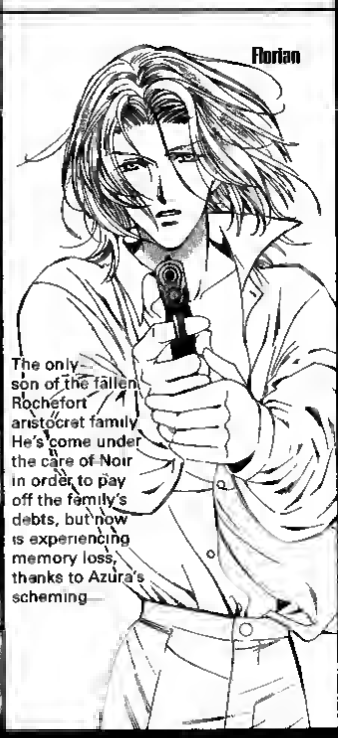
Phantom Thief Noir A.K.A. Ray Balzac Courland

The oh so cool phantom thief that all of Paris is talking about. He now searches for the lost treasure of the Knights Templar as a favor to Azura.

GORGEOUS CARAT

Virtue of Darkness

Character Introductions



Florian

The only son of the fallen Rochefort aristocrat family. He's come under the care of Noir in order to pay off the family's debts, but now is experiencing memory loss, thanks to Azura's scheming.

NO... AZURA!
HEY... AZURA!
WHY DID YOU PROTECT HIM?
IT WAS SO LONG AGO...
HE COULD TURN HIS BACK ON US IN A SECOND!
HE'S NOT EVEN ONE OF US!
Third Curtain:
The Blue Devil of Maghreb
AZURA!
DON'T COME NEAR ME, RAY!

GORGEOUS CARAT

Virtue of Darkness

4

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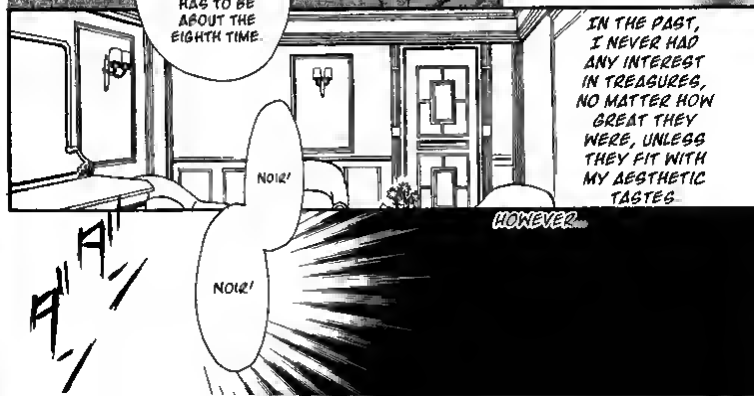
Third Curtain:
The Blue Devil of Maghreb
BUT NOW, I'VE LOST THAT FRAGMENT OF MY HEART
THE PEARL-BLUE EYE WHICH PIERCED ME WITH ITS GAZE... WE WERE BLOOD BROTHERS BOUND BY SOMETHING DEEPER THAN ANYTHING ELSE...
YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN ANOTHER CHANCE, SO GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!
DID YOU REALLY WANT TO LIVE YOUR WHOLE LIFE ROTTING IN THIS PATHETIC SLUM?
DON'T YOU DARE LET THIS OPPORTUNITY SLIP BY!

WHAT?!
IT'S FLORIAN. HE'S ACTING STRANGE!
I DIDN'T THINK THE WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS OF THE OPIUM WOULD LAST THIS LONG...
WHAT IS IT?!
QUIT IT WITH ALL THE NOISE!

FLORIAN!

THE CODE TO THE TREASURE AZURA WAS SO INTENT ON FINDING..
M... CC... LXX...
IF "M" STANDS FOR "1000," THEN THIS MUST STAND FOR THE NUMBER OF THE YEAR
WHEN THE STAR OF THE QUEEN'S NEW CAPITAL FALLS TO SACRED RUING, AND JOINS THE FALLEN HOLY KING MCCLXX 1270.
1270, HUH?
JUST WHAT IS THE TREASURE OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR?
THE DEATH OF A HOLY KING THE CRUSADERS OF THE HOLY KING THIS HAS TO BE ABOUT THE EIGHTH TIME.


IN THE PAST, I NEVER HAD ANY INTEREST IN TREASURES, NO MATTER HOW GREAT THEY WERE, UNLESS THEY FIT WITH MY AESTHETIC TASTES
HOWEVER...
NOIR!
NOIR!

AAAGH!
.....!
HE'S COMPLETELY DELUSIONAL MAYBE IT'S BEST WE LEAVE HIM ALONE FOR A WHILE
FLORIAN!
NO...
NO! DON'T TOUCH ME!
IT'S ME! NOIR!
DON'T YOU KNOW ME?

UGH.
UGH
I FEEL LIKE MY HEAD'S GOING TO—SPLIT IN TWO!
AAH
BLOOD...BLOOD FLYING EVERYWHERE...
THIS INDESCRIBABLE FEAR
HEY YOU OKAY?

LOOK OVER THERE!
THAT MAN'S TRYING TO--
FLORIAN!
WHAT'S GOING ON?
ERGH!
WAIT!
FLORIAN! WHERE ARE YOU--
BUT WHERE?
I NEED TO GET AWAY! I NEED TO GET AWAY.
WHERE...?
NO!

SHEESH!
JUST WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?
.....
I'M COLD...
COLD...
SO COLD...

NO...
STOP IT! NO!
OUCH! QUIT STRUGGLING!
!!
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
YOU IDIOT!
DAMN IT
FLORIAN!

I WONDER IF NOIR EVEN REALIZES HOW SORROWFUL HIS EYES LOOK...
AND ALL I CAN DO IS WATCH
THIS!
I
MARTIN

COME ON, STAND UP.
LET'S GET YOU BACK TO YOUR ROOM. SOME BRANDY WILL WARM YOU RIGHT UP.
THOSE EYES...
!

IN OTHER WORDS, POWER IS WHAT CONTROLS EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD
THAT'S WHY, EVEN IF WE TRIED TO TAKE BACK OUR LAND, WE'D FIRST HAVE TO THINK OF WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO OUR COUNTRY AT THE HANDS OF THOSE WITH GREAT POWER
I'M SICK OF BEING OPPRESSED
THAT'S WHY WE NEED TO GAIN WHATEVER POWER WE CAN
A HUNCH?
BUT...
...I HAVE A HUNCH.
A POWER THAT NO ONE CAN EVER OPPRESS
I DON'T KNOW WHAT POWER THAT MAY BE
THAT'S THE OLD CITY
AND THIS WAY IS THE NEW CITY BUILT BY THE FRENCH.
RAY
LOOK AT THAT
!

THAT FRAGMENT OF MY HEART... I'VE LOST
WHAT A JOKE...
HA... HA...

LET'S BE TOGETHER FOREVER!
YES! TOGETH-ER!
AZURA?
THAT SOMEDAY, WE'LL GET THAT POWER
YOU AND I TOGETHER, RAY.

RIGHT MY BAD
BUT WOULD YOU MIND GETTING OFF MY FOOT?
OH, YOU'RE ALIVE JEEZ, DON'T SCARE ME LIKE THAT
OLD MAN--
YOWCH!
Can you stand?
Ow ow
WHAT'S ALL THIS MESS FOR?
IT WAS AZURA
HE'S STILL ALIVE
WHAT?
BUT AZURA WAS --

WHAT'S THE MATTER?
WHAT THE...
FATIMA?
WHAA
HIC!
I'M SORRY...
I'M SO SORRY...
WHERE'S YOUR GRAND-FATHER?
WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
OH!
ME SOLOMON!

RUMOR HAS IT...
...HE'S THE LEADER OF THE ENTIRE GROUP.
WAIT A MINUTE! I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF AN INVESTIGATION HERE--
HE'S NOT MERELY AFFILIATED WITH THE BLACK HAND.
THEN YOU'D BE BETTER OFF ASKING AZUEA ABOUT IT YOURSELF.
SOME-ONE
ME?
HUH?
HIM?!
THE HEAD OF THE BLACK HAND?

FATIMA
WHERE RAY IS?
YOU DIDN'T TELL HIM, DID YOU?
I DID IT! I TOLD HIM WHERE!
IT WASN'T GRANDPA!
HE CAME HERE ASKING WHERE RAY WAS.
WELL, HE'S ALIVE AND WELL, ALL RIGHT.
BUT... I HAD TO!
IF NOT, THEY WERE GOING TO KILL GRANDPA!
THAT BAD MAN WAS CHOKING HIM!
OKAY, OKAY I UNDERSTAND.
NO NEED TO CRY. I'M NOT BLAMING YOU.
SOMEONE MUST WARN THEM!
AZUEA
...IS NOW HEADED TO TUNIS, AFTER RAY

AND HE USED TO BE SUCH A SWEET CHILD
EVERYTHING CHANGED WHEN HE GOT BACK FROM AMERICA
AMERICA...?
I THINK HIS NAME WAS ROMWELL
YES
IT WAS THAT WEALTHY MAN...
ROMWELL?
THERE'S GOTTA BE SOME MISTAKE, OLD MAN
NO! GRANDPA HAS AN AMAZING MEMORY!
HE KNOWS THE BIRTHDAY OF EVERYONE IN THE AREA!
BUT IF THAT'S REALLY TRUE...
THEN THIS IS BIGGER THAN I THOUGHT
AND IF IT REALLY IS THE ROMWELL FAMILY...
THEN THAT WOULD MEAN THEY'RE BEHIND THE BLACK HAND...

HE WAS THE YOUNG MAN STANDING IN THE SHADOW OF MR. ROMWELL, RULER OF THE AMERICAN FINANCIAL EMPIRE.
I SAW HIM ONCE, YEARS AGO!
OH MY GOD.
THAT'S [illegible]. I THOUGHT I HAD A STRANGE FEELING THE FIRST TIME I MET AZURA.
THE SON OF ROMWELL, JOHN DAVIS ROMWELL JR.
WHEN I THINK BACK TO IT, NO ONE ELSE STOOD OUT AS MUCH AS HIM!

HER FAMILY BACK AT HOME EVEN THREATENED TO DISOWN HER IF SHE MARRIED HIM.
Ha ha ha
YOU MAY NOT BELIEVE IT, BUT IT'S ALL TRUE.
BUT MY MOTHER WASN'T AFRAID.
THERE, SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH THE SON OF THE HEAD OF AN ARABIC CLAN AND BECAME PREGNANT WITH ME.
I WAS BORN, AND FOR A TIME, LIFE WAS PEACEFUL THAT MUST'VE BEEN THE HAPPIEST TIME OF HER LIFE.
SO SHE LEFT TO THE LAND OF EGYPT ON HER OWN.

I'VE FINALLY BEGUN TO SEE THE PATH TO THE TRUTH OF YOUR DEATHS.
JULIA
CARL...
SHE HATED THE STIFF LIFE OF A WOMAN OF ROYALTY.
MY MOTHER WAS A VERY ACTIVE AND SMART WOMAN.

WHAT WAS A KID LIKE ME ABLE TO DO?
SHE GREW WEAKER BY THE DAY...

HOWEVER...
MY FATHER DIED...
AFTER MY GRANDFATHER'S DEATH, THERE WAS A FIGHT OVER THE HEIR TO THE THRONE, AND HE WAS MURDERED.

SOON AFTER, AN ASSASSIN CAME AFTER MY MOTHER'S AND MY LIFE...
WE WERE IN GREAT DANGER...
SO WE RAN AWAY
THAT WAS WHEN I REALIZED JUST HOW FRAGILE AUTHORITY AND POWER WERE
NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRIED TO CLING TO IT, IT WAS CRUMPLED IN MY FINGERS LIKE A BUILDING OF SAND

WE MANAGED TO ESCAPE TO THE CITY OF FEZ.
BUT DUE TO THE ANXIETY FACING US, MY MOTHER SOON FELL ILL.

HE LET ME INTO HIS GANG, AND TAUGHT ME THE WAYS TO SURVIVE.
THAT WAS WHEN I MET AZURA.
A WARM HAND REACHED OUT TO ME.
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME ..
WE'D CURL UP LIKE STRAY CATS IN A DIRTY CORNER OF A COLLAPSED SHED.
AND I CAME TO LIVE WITH AZURA.
BEFORE LONG, MY MOTHER PASSED AWAY.
I WOULD DO ANYTHING TO SURVIVE
I WAS BARELY EVEN TEN YEARS OLD, AND I'D ALREADY FALLEN AS LOW AS YOU CAN GO.

I COULD BELIEVE IN...
...WAS NOIR
...AND HIM
AND BECAUSE OF MY WEAKNESS
...YOU WERE HURT, FLORIAN.
WHY YOU?

BUT...
...AZURA ONCE TOLD ME..
THE LIGHT FROM OUTSIDE WAS SO BRILLIANT WHEN YOU SAW IT FROM THE SHADOWS I'M SURE I MUST'VE LOOKED LIKE A MAGGOT.
EVEN BAD THINGS IN THE LIGHT CAN CHANGE INTO SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL IN THE DARKNESS.
THE DARKNESS IS OUR FRIEND. IT'S NOT LIGHT THAT GOVERNS THIS WORLD, BUT RATHER DARKNESS
NOIR
THAT'S HOW I GOT MY NAME
THE ONLY THING

F-
FLORIAN?
DAMN IT
?!

YOU...
YOU'RE BACK!
!
WHERE ARE WE EXACTLY?

!
MY MOTHER USED TO HOLD ME LIKE THIS.
AND THIS WAY...
...MY SADNESS WOULD SOFTEN EVEN A LITTLE...

SIGH...
NOIR?
YEAH, RIGHT
AFTER I FINALLY SNAPPED OUT OF IT.
BUT I GOTTA SAY...
...I'M RELIEVED.

I NEVER IMAGINED YOU COULD CRY
MY CONSCIOUSNESS WAS FADING FOR A WHILE, BUT...
...I COMPLETELY AWAKENED JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO
YOU... KNOW WHO I AM?
FOR HOW LONG?
YOU--!
FORGET EVERYTHING!
JUST PRETEND YOU DIDN'T HEAR OR SEE ANYTHING THAT JUST HAPPENED!
IT WAS JUST THE ALCOHOL TALKING, GOT IT?
UPH!

AND...
...FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR SADNESS...
...THAT FLOWED THROUGH EVEN TO MY CLOSED-OFF HEART.
I NEED YOU AROUND TO PAY OFF THE HUGE DEBT YOU STILL OWE ME
NOT TO MENTION ALL THE INTEREST THAT'S ACCUMULATED.
You wanna see?
!
YOU VILE USURER!
...
I WAS WORRIED THAT YOU'D NEVER COME BACK TO US.
REALLY
SOMETIMES IT'S EASIER JUST TO RUN AWAY FROM EVERYTHING, YOU KNOW?
BUT
...I DIDN'T WANT TO DO THAT.
FOR MY OWN SAKE...
I LIKE YOUR ATTITUDE

HMM...
BUT YEAH, THIS LOOKS LIKE IT'S REALLY GOING TO BE SOMETHING BIG
KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN! WHAT IF SOMEONE OVERHEARS YOU?
OH SORRY...
THIS ISN'T JUST SOMETHING BELONGING TO A BIG MERCHANT ITS VALUE MUST BE MORE THAN WE CAN IMAGINE!
AS FOR WHAT THAT EXACTLY IS... I HAVEN'T GOT THE SLIGHTEST
IT WAS SOME-THING...
..LIKE A MARVEL OF THE WORLD, THAT SYMBOLIZED ULTIMATE POWER
AND IT SEEMS THE THING AZURA WAS AFTER...
WAS SOMETHING OTHER THAN THAT

I'M FINE. BESIDES, SHOULDN'T YOU STILL BE RESTING?
LAILA?
ANYTHING I CAN HELP YOU WITH?
There's no where to walk!
JEEZ!
WHAT A HUGE MESS!
FLORIAN!
JUST TAKE IT EASY FOR NOW...
HE SAID HE NEEDED TO TAKE A WALK TO ORGANIZE HIS THOUGHTS
I'M DOING IT BECAUSE I WANT TO!
SO WHERE'S NOIR?
IT'S NOT FAIR LETTING YOU HANDLE ALL THE WORK ON YOUR OWN
HEY!
SSHHH!
HE'S AFTER THE TREASURE OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR AND--
HE MENTIONED

SO THEY'VE BECOME TREASURE HUNTERS?
THE TREASURE OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR?
THIS SOUNDS LIKE FUN
THE HOLY KING THAT DIED IN 1270.
DURING THE EIGHTH CRUSADE, LOUIS THE NINTH, WHO WAS CALLED THE HOLY KING, DIED SUDDENLY DUE TO AN ILLNESS.
TUNISIA!
OF COURSE!
ALL THE CLUES POINT HERE!

WHERE DID YOU HEAR TH--
I FEEL I HAVE A "DUTY" TO FULFILL IN HELPING YOU OUT
WHY, NOT AT ALL
FOR MYSELF
AND I'D LIKE TO SEE THE LOST TREASURE OF THE KNIGHTS Ttemplar
OH MY GOD!
?!
VISCOUNT COURLAND! LOOK!
LEAVE THE REST TO ME. YOU GUYS GO ON AHEAD!
THIS WAY!
HURRY!
WH-WHAT'S THE MATTER, LAILA?

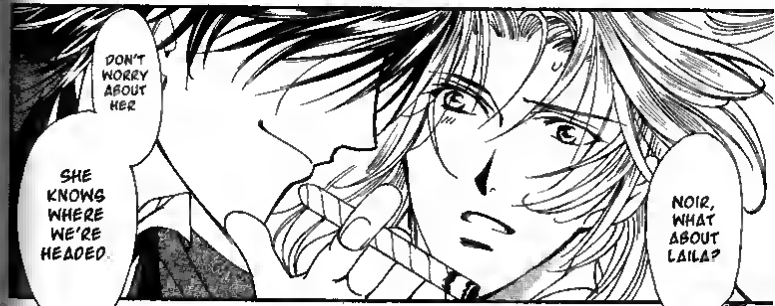
Tunisia
WITH THE SAHARA DESERT TO ITS SOUTH, AND MEDITERRANEAN SEA TO THE NORTH AND WEST, THE CITY OF TUNIS HAS BEEN A TRADING CITY SINCE OLDEN TIMES
AND AFTER FALLING UNDER THE PROTECTORATE OF US FRENCH, THE CITY HAS BECOME ONE OF THE MOST DEVELOPED IN NORTH AFRICA
HEY, MICHEL
SOME WOULD EVEN CALL IT THE LOUVRE OF TUNISIA!
OH! AND THE ALAOUI MUSEUM IS A MUST-SEE!
THANKS FOR BRINGING US ALL THE WAY HERE AND ALL, BUT
...YOU CAN LEAVE NOW I'M SURE YOU'VE GOT PLENTY OF WORK TO DO
CAN'T YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT HIM?
He's been rambling on since we got here

TUNIS AND CARTHAGE ARE PRETTY CLOSE TO EACH OTHER, BUT
THIS IS QUITE A HILL.
PHEW!
I'm running out of breath!
YOU'RE BEING AWFULLY NICE IT'S ALMOST CREEPY.
Thanks though.

Hmph.
YOU'RE STILL RECOVERING.
I WON'T ALWAYS BE LIKE THIS.

HEY! RAY BALZAC, YOU COWARD!
VICTORY

THAT CAMEL'S TAKING A NAP!
SO...?
?!


DON'T WORRY ABOUT HER
SHE KNOWS WHERE WE'RE HEADED.
NOIR, WHAT ABOUT LAILA?

ALSO KNOWN AS...
CARTHAGE.
QART HADASHT, THE QUEEN'S NEW CAPITAL.

FROM HERE, YOU CAN GET A CLEAR VIEW OF CARTHAGE
THE LOCATION IS THAT WAY
IF YOU LOOK AT THE AREA AROUND BOTH TOPHET AND THE CATHEDRAL OF ST LOUIS
...THEY MEET HERE.
A PLACE WHERE ANCIENT CARTHAGE'S TWO GREAT GODS WERE WORSHIPPED
THERE, AS RITUALS TO THE GODS, THE PEOPLE BURNED CHILDREN AS OFFERINGS
UNH
THEY'RE THE REMAINS OF EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCHES FROM THE FIRST CENTURY A.D
THIS ENTIRE AREA IS THE SITE OF ANCIENT CARTHAGE, AND HAS BEEN THE TOPIC OF DISCUSSION FOR A LONG TIME NOW
DAMU AL CARTHAGE?
NOW, THAT MAY HAVE SIMPLY BEEN IN ARCHEOLOGICAL TERMS OR...
...IF OUR GUESS IS CORRECT, THEN--
HE ORDERED HIS MEN TO FIND THE TREASURE OF CARTHAGE AND KEEP AN EYE ON THE PLACE
ABOUT 40 YEARS AGO, IT WAS UNEARTHED AT THE CARDINAL LAVIGERIE'S COMMAND

WAY BACK WHEN, WHEN LOUIS THE NINTH DIED DURING THE CRUSADES, THIS PLACE WAS USED AS A PLACE OF WORSHIP FOR HIM
LOUIS THE NINTH? SAINT LOUIS?
A KING THAT BECAME A SAINT... DID HE DIE HERE?
ACCORDING TO THE ANCIENT DOCUMENTS
"WHEN THE STAR OF THE QUEEN'S NEW CAPITAL FALLS TO SACRED RUING, AND JOINING THE FALLEN HOLY KING MCCLXX 1270"
SO THE "SACRED RUINS" FOUND IN CARTHAGE...
IT MUST MEAN, TOPHET
TOPHET?
WHERE ARE WE?
WHAT'S A BRAND NEW CHURCH DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?
THIS IS THE CATHEDRAL OF ST LOUIS
IT WAS BUILT RECENTLY.

LAILA?
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE PLANNING ON RUNNING OFF TOO!
LAILA
!
LET'S WALK A LITTLE FURTHER APART.
Is that everything he has to say to a girl's face?
WHEN IT COMES TO ADMIRING A WOMAN'S BEAUTY, WHAT DOES MY RACE OR STATUS MATTER?
ALL I'M SAYING IS THAT YOU BELONG IN THE CATEGORY OF THINGS I CONSIDER TO BE BEAUTIFUL.
WAIT A MINUTE, LAILA!
I--
HIDE!
OI
OI
SHH!

HMM... IS THAT REALLY ALL?
WELL, THIS IS JUST GREAT!
THANKS TO YOU, I'VE LOST SIGHT OF RAY.
YOU'VE SURE GOT A LOT OF LOYALTY FOR THE GUY.
HE'S MY BOSS. WHAT ELSE DO YOU EXPECT?
?
EXCUSE ME?
DON'T START GETTING THE WRONG IDEA ABOUT US
WHY?
YOU LOOK NOTHING LESS THAN A CHARMING YOUNG GIRL TO ME.
Y- YOU'RE SO STRANGE.
FOR BEING WHITE, AND AN ARISTOCRAT AT THAT
FOR ONE MY LOVE WOULD ONLY BE TROUBLE FOR HIM

I CAN'T STAY HERE FOR LONG
WE HAVE TO GET TO CARTHAGE--
OOPS!
HE WAS A FRIEND OF NOI--I MEAN, RAY
ROMNELL JR.?
WHAT'S HE DOING HERE?
ROMNELL? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THAT'S THE MILLIONAIRE AZURA FROM FEZ!
ハッ!
ALL RIGHT! CARTHAGE IT IS!
I'LL ARRANGE FOR A TRAIN, LICKITY-SPLIT!
Foolish Layla
ALL MY HARD WORK IN VAIN...
!

IT.. CAN'T BE..
NO...
THERE'S NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT.
WHAT ON EARTH--
BE QUIET
IT'S AZURA!
AZURA'S... ALIVE!
HE MUST BE AFTER NOIR WHAT DO I DO? I HAVE TO TELL NOIR ABOUT THIS!

THIS MAN REALLY IS--
I'D THINK IT BEST THAT YOU WATCH YOUR TONGUE
NOW TELL ME, WHERE IS RAY?
UNLESS YOU'D LIKE TO WATCH ME BLOW THE PRETTY LADY'S HEAD OFF FIRST
WHICH WILL IT BE, VISCOUNT COURLAND?
RAY...
RAY BALZAC'S HEADED FOR CARTHAGE
NOW LET THE GIRL GO.

UPH!

YOU IDIOT! WHY'S YOU TELL HIM?
NOW LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENED!
THAT THAT WASN'T PART OF THE DEAL!
WHOEVER SAID IT WAS?
Heh, heh, heh...
THEY'RE USELESS
DISPOSE OF THEM
WHAT DO WE DO WITH THESE TWO, BOSS?

?!
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
WELL HELLO THERE, LITTLE MISS. FANCY MEETING YOU HERE

IT'S NO USE PLAYING DUMB WITH ME.
I'VE SEEN YOU PLENTY OF TIMES IN AMERICAN CLUBS.
THERE'S NO WAY I'D FORGET A FACE LIKE YOURS!
WHATEVER DO YOU MEAN?
THIS IS AN OUTRAGE!
DON'T THINK YOU'LL GET AWAY WITH THIS!
ROMNELL JR., I DEMAND TO KNOW THE MEANING OF THIS!

DAMN IT!
THAT'S FAR ENOUGH
COME FACE ME, AZURA!
HEY! HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!
YOU COWARD!
?!

LAILA!
☆
BESIDES, I WASN'T FEELING SAFE WITH JUST VISCOUNT COURLAND ANYWAY.
FINE WE'LL GO TOGETHER
I'M AFTER AZURA FOR A SEPARATE CASE
HE COINCIDENTLY LED ME TO YOU GUYS.
DAMN IT! I LOST HIM!
I'D EXPECT IT TO BE DESOLATE.
BUT BENEATH THEM ARE THE REMAINS OF THE LOST PHOENICIA.
THEY HAVEN'T BEGUN EXCAVATION IN THIS AREA YET.
WHAT A DESOLATE PLACE.
ARE THESE THE ANCIENT RUINS OF THE CHURCH?
HEY!
☆
FAY'S STALKER
WHO'S THIS GUY?
HOW 'BOUT A LITTLE GRATITUDE?
IS THAT ANY WAY TO THANK YOUR SAVIOR?
JUST WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, MR. DETECTIVE?
SO ?

NOW WHERE DO WE GO..?
HEY, NOIR!
THERE'S SOMETHING GLITTERING ON THE GROUND OVER THERE
NOIR?
THIS COLOR IS DEFINITELY NOT N_TU_AL...
THIS THIG IS...
HEY, FLORIAN!
GET DOWN--
WATCH OUT! BEHIND YOU!
HUH?
EVERY-THING OKAY?
YEAH
THERE'S SOME-THING UNNATURAL ABOUT IT
BUT DOESN'T THAT ONE SPOT LOOK RAISED A LITTLE?
?!
HUH.
IT'S A MOSAIC
A PICTURE MADE BY ARRANGING TINY PIECES OF COLORED STONE
IT'S NOT RARE IN RUINS LIKE THESE

HUH?
Wow
WHY, YOU LITTLE--
UOH!
SORRY, BUT THE KID'S MINE.
DON'T THINK YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU WANT WITH HIM

WHOA!
FLORIAN!
MISFORTUNE SHALL STRIKE DOWN THOSE WHO DARE BLASPHEME GOD!
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
JUST WHO ARE YOU?
YOU VERMIN ARE THE ONES WHO ARE AFTER OUR TREASURE OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR!
YOU'VE DONE WELL GETTING THIS FAR...
HOW-EVER...
WE WOULD GIVE UP OUR VERY LIVES THAN EVER LET IT FALL INTO YOUR HANDS!
NOW YOU DIE!
FLORIAN!
HE'S TOO STRONG!

HUH?
RELAX, IDIOT
IT'S NOT SOMETHING TO GET SO WORKED UP OVER
BUT...
I SUPPOSE THAT'S JUST PART OF WHO YOU ARE.
You're younger than me!
Quite treating me like a kid all the time!
HA HA HA!

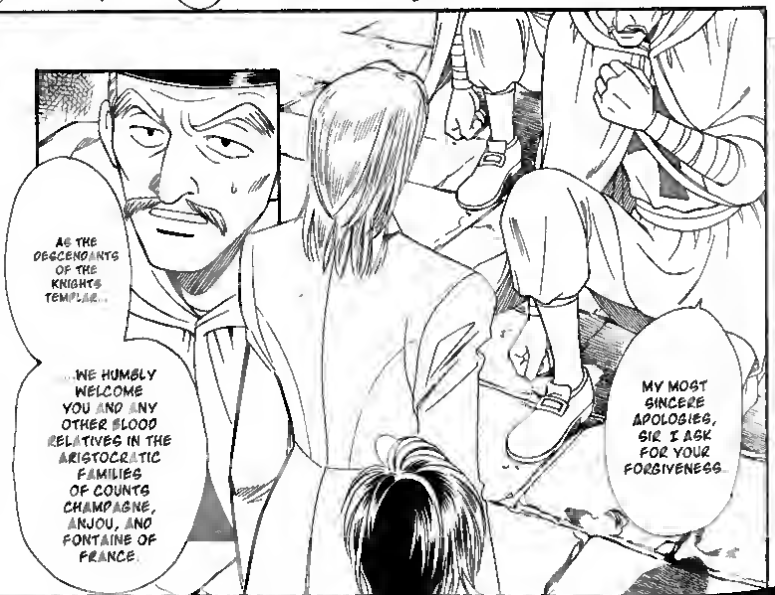
AND THE BRIGHT RED OF FRESH BLOOD ON THE GROUND

SO YOU'VE STARTED CARRYING A GUN NOW, HUH?
YOU OKAY?
ERGH!
DAMN IT!
YEAH I'M OKAY
SOMEWHERE IN THE FOREST OF MY BLANK MEMORY, I CAN STILL FEEL MY HAND SHAKING WITH THE RECOIL OF A GUN
SORRY
IT JUST REMINDS ME OF SOME UNPLEASANT THINGS

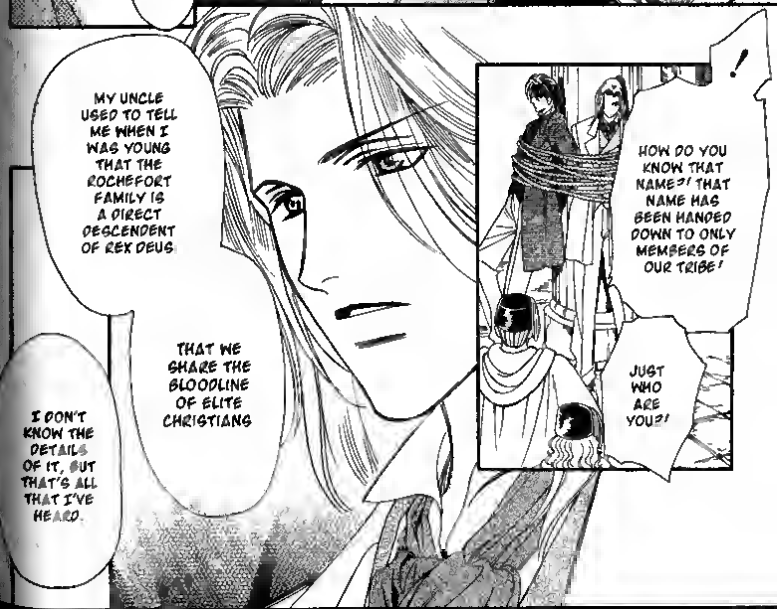
IT MUST BE BECAUSE YOU STOLE THE ANCIENT SCRIPTURES FROM THE LES ANDELYS FORT!
THEN HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS PLACE?!
COME ON
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU?
WE'RE NOT THE ONES AFTER YOUR TREASURE!
?!
ALL RIGHT, I DID TAKE A LOOK AT THE ANCIENT SCROLLS OF LES ANDELYS
BUT I RECEIVED THEM FROM SOMEONE!
IT WAS STOLEN FROM US!
AND IT MUST'VE BEEN BY THE CRIME SYNDICATE, THE BLACK HAND, WHO INVADED OUR FORTRESS OF LES ANDELYS!
THE BLACK HAND?!

TAKE A LOOK AT THAT
IT'S THE "STAR OF THE QUEEN'S NEW CAPITAL"
WATCH YOURSELF
THAT WAS ONLY A PIECE OF THE PUZZLE
AND IT WAS REFERRING TO THIS DESIGN
WE WON'T KNOW FOR SURE UNLESS WE TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THAT, BUT IT MIGHT BE--
?!

YOU MEAN "WAS"
UNTIE THE ROPES IMMEDIATELY!
SHUT UP. ☆
A MEMBER OF THAT NOBLE, ARISTOCRATIC FAMILY?!
NO
YOU MEAN YOU'RE SAYING YOU'RE A MEMBER OF THE ROCHEFORT FAMILY?!


AS THE DESCENDANTS OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR...
...WE HUMBLY WELCOME YOU AND ANY OTHER BLOOD RELATIVES IN THE ARISTOCRATIC FAMILIES OF COUNTS CHAMPAGNE, ANJOU, AND FONTAINE OF FRANCE.
MY MOST SINCERE APOLOGIES, SIR. I ASK FOR YOUR FORGIVENESS.

THEN AZUZA MUST'VE BEEN PART OF THE BLACK HAND?!
THAT MUST BE WHY THEY'RE AFTER HIM!
THE ANCIENT SCRIPTURE AND THIS LAND ARE ONLY MEANT FOR THE BLOOD RELATIVES OF THE "HOLY KING."
WE ARE THE CHOSEN ONES OF GOD.
THE "HOLY KING"?
REX DEUS...


!
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT NAME?! THAT NAME HAS BEEN HANDED DOWN TO ONLY MEMBERS OF OUR TRIBE!
JUST WHO ARE YOU?!
MY UNCLE USED TO TELL ME WHEN I WAS YOUNG THAT THE ROCHEFORT FAMILY IS A DIRECT DESCENDENT OF REX DEUS.
THAT WE SHARE THE BLOODLINE OF ELITE CHRISTIANS
I DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS OF IT, BUT THAT'S ALL THAT I'VE HEARD.

SOON AFTER JESUS CHRIST WAS KILLED, THE GENOCIDE OF THE JEWS ENSUED
AT THAT TIME, JERUSALEM'S ENORMOUS TREASURE HAD ALREADY GROWN INTO A WEALTH UNTOLD, SO A RELIGIOUS GROUP ORDERED IT TO BE BURIED DEEP BELOW THE EARTH
THE TREASURE OF THE HOLY TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM?
THEN, AT THE HANDS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE WHICH INVADED THE COUNTRY, NEARLY ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE ORDER WERE KILLED, AND THE HOLY LAND WAS LEFT IN RUING
AND SO, THE LOST TREASURE OF JERUSALEM BECAME A LEGEND FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS
AFTER THE DEATH OF HOLY KING LOUIS, THE ANCESTORS OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR CARRIED THE TREASURE TO THIS LOCATION
...AND VOWED TO GUARD IT UNTIL THE RETURN OF THE TRUE "HOLY KING."
THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR CARRY ON THE BLOOD OF JERUSALEM'S HOLY PRIESTS...
...AND PROTECT THE SACRED BLOODLINE OF DAVID
BUT...

DURING THE GREAT CRUSADES IN THE YEAR 1250, KING LOUIS THE NINTH FIRST DISCOVERED THE TREASURE IN THE HOLY LAND OF JERUSALEM
AFTER RETURNING HOME TO FRANCE FOR A SHORT WHILE, HE FINISHED HIS PREPARATIONS AND INITIATED THE EIGHTH CRUSADE TO CARRY THE TREASURE BACK
THIS WILL BE A LONG STORY...
YOU MEAN TO SAY...
...YOUR PEOPLE HAVE BEEN GUARDING THIS PLACE SINCE THE CRUSADES?
HOWEVER, HE WAS SUDDENLY MET WITH A FATAL ILLNESS AND HIS PLAN WAS ASRUPTLY CUT OFF
HE DIED RIGHT HERE IN CARTHAGE
THE TREASURE OF THE HOLY TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM?
IS IT... THAT LEGEND?
THE FLOOR JUST ...SLID RIGHT OPEN!

MOVE..?
?
THESE INSCRIPTIONS WERE THE ANCIENT DOCUMENTS OF LEG ANDELYS COPIED FROM THIS?
NOIR, BE CAREFUL WITH THAT THING! YOU MIGHT BREAK IT!
NO NEED TO STOP HIM
HUH?
THAT IS THE VERY REASON WHY WE BROUGHT YOU HERE

HUH?
THERE'S NOTHING HERE
EXACTLY
IT'S CLEAR THAT THE TREASURE WAS ALREADY LONG GONE BY THE TIME OUR ANCESTORS WERE FRAMED AND PUNISHED
THAT IS WHY WE STILL REMAIN, TO FIND WHERE THE LOST TREASURE HAS GONE

THIS TEXT MUST BE ANCIENT.
As usual
B--
BOSS !
YOUNG GEOFFROI HERE IS A DIRECT DESCENDANT OF A HIGH PRIEST.
THAT RING'S BEEN PASSED DOWN IN HIS FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS
WHAT ELSE DO YOU EXPECT?
!

THAT'S RIGHT. IT'S LIKELY OVER 500 YEARS OLD
BUT NONE OF US CAN FIGURE OUT WHAT IS SAYS
THIS IS...?
YES?
GEOFFROI!
BUT THIS COPPER PIPE WON'T OPEN...
BUT IF YOU WERE ABLE TO CRACK THE CODE OF THE LEG ANDELYS SCROLLS AND COME THIS FAR, YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND IT
WHOA
IT'S A SECRET LOCK!
AMAZING!
カチッ
ぱっ

AZU-RA!
YOU'RE ALIVE?!
THE BOY'S WIMPY BULLETS WEREN'T ENOUGH TO FINISH ME.
.....!!

WE MEET AGAIN, EAY
I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU
THANK YOU FOR SHOWING ME THE WAY.
?!
!
YOU NAUGHTY, NAUGHTY BOY
DID YOU REALLY THINK YOU COULD GET AWAY FROM ME?

YOU MEAN THERE'S ANOTHER WAY OUT?
HUH?
LET'S GO.

BUT, BOSS!
LEAVE THIS SCOUNDREL TO US!
TAKE GEOFFROI AND GET OUT OF HERE!
TAKE THE RING!
NO MATTER WHAT, YOU MUST FIND THE TREASURE!
NON, SO!
RAAAR!
THIS WAY! HURRY!

NOW WHERE WILL IT BE NEXT?
THE HEAD?
OR...
IF YOU ACT LIKE A GOOD LITTLE BOY AND COME OUT HERE...
I MAY SPARE YOUR LIVES
DAMN IT!
GONNA SHOOT US FROM ABOVE?
GEOFFROI! DON'T MOVE!
URGH...
ARGH!

THE PLATE BENEATH THE SCRIPTURES...
!
AND I DON'T KNOW IF I'D EVEN CALL IT A SCRIPTURE
THESE AREN'T EVEN LETTERS
MORE LIKE SYMBOLS... THERE HAS TO BE SOME SORT OF PATTERN
HMM...
I GUESS THAT'S NOT IT. THEY'RE ABOUT THE SAME SIZE, BUT...
THEY DON'T MATCH UP
THE ANJOU FAMILY?
AND IT SEEMS IT USED TO BELONG TO HIS ANCESTORS OF THE ANJOU FAMILY
HE SAYS IT IS THE SEAL FOR THE LOST TREASURE
THE RING?
NOIR
GEOFFROI SAID TO TRY USING THIS

HMPH
PLEASE... LET US TREAT HIS WOUNDS
IF YOU FIGURE OUT WHAT THESE SCRIPTURES MEAN, THEN I MIGHT CONSIDER IT
AT THIS RATE--
GEOFFROI!
AH
UGH...
NOIR!
YOU'RE CRAZY! YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW LONG IT TOOK ME WITH THE LAST ONE?

!
THE PLATE'S SPLIT INTO TWO!
WAS THE SCROLL SHOWING THIS PART OF IT?
IT ALMOST LOOKS LIKE A RELIEF
MAYBE MY TIE WILL WORK...
AND NOW IF WE MATCH UP THE OTHER HALF'S MAP
LIKE SO
THE RELIEF BENEATH SHOULD SHOW THROUGH
IT'S ALMOST LIKE AN ART PRINT

NOIR!
SO HE'S A DESCENDENT OF FRENCH ROYALTY FROM BEFORE KING LOUIS'S REIGN?
HE MUST'VE HAD IT HARD, STAYING HERE TO GUARD THE TREASURE...
COULD THIS HOLE BE THE KEY?
IT'S NO GOOD, IT WON'T FIT...
?!
THE TOP CAN TWIST...
CHARLES D'ANJOU?!
?!
CHARLES

CHARLES D'ANJOU, ALSO KNOWN AS CHARLES OF SICILY, WAS THE YOUNGEST BROTHER OF KING LOUIS THE NINTH!
AS A MEMBER OF THE ARISTOCRACY, YOU SHOULD AT LEAST KNOW THAT MUCH!
AFTER HIS OLDER BROTHER'S DEMISE, CHARLES TOOK CONTROL OF THE CITY OF ACRE NEAR JERUSALEM
THAT'S WHEN IT'S SAID THAT HE SECRETLY TOOK THE TREASURE THAT THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR PROTECTED BACK TO HIS LAND
OH!
I SEE IT ALL MAKES SENSE NOW
WHAT DOES?
HOW COME ONLY YOU GET IT?
CY...CLOPS I'M SURE... THERE'S AN ANJOU FAMILY CASTLE THERE...
THEN THAT'S WHERE WE'RE HEADED NEXT
WAIT! GEOFFROI'S INJURED!
HE NEEDS MEDICAL--

Rome
Naples
Tyrrhenian Sea
Sicily
Tunis
Mediterranean Sea
Italy
Tunisia
A CHURCH? NO, WAIT
IT MIGHT BE A SKETCH OF FORTS FROM THE MIDDLE AGES
CY...CL.. OPS? WHAT A STRANGE NAME.
MUST BE THE NAME OF THIS PLACE
CY...CLOPS
IT'S ONE OF... THE TINY ISLANDS IN THE TYRRHENIAN SEA.
THE NAME "CHARLES D'ANJOU" THAT WAS CARVED ONTO THE RING WAS THE NAME OF THE FRENCH KING WHO GOVERNED NAPLES AND SICILY DURING THE TIMES OF THE CRUSADES, RIGHT?
YOU MEAN THAT HE WAS YOUR ANCESTOR?!
YES.

STOP IT, AZURA!
AH!
YOU...!
YOU MONSTER!
IF YOU TRY MY ANGER AGAIN, FLORIAN...
YOU'LL END UP JUST LIKE THIS MAN
!
!
DAMN YOU--
WE CAN DO WITHOUT THE EXTRA BAGGAGE

STAY AWAY FROM HIM!
AH...
AH!
JUST AS SENSITIVE AS EVER, I SEE
OR IS THIS SITUATION TURNING YOU ON THAT MUCH?
AH...
AZURA!
YOU BASTARD!
NO
STOP IT!
PERHAPS I SHOULD'VE USED A LITTLE MORE OPIUM ON YOU UNTIL YOU WERE A SOULLESS DOLL
IT SEEMS...
YOU'VE COMPLETELY REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS

ARGH!
WHY..
- ARE YOU DOING THIS?
YOU LIKE IT WHEN I DO THIS TO YOU, DON'T YOU?
NO..
!
N-NO..
AZURA, STOP
DON'T MAKE ME HATE YOU ANY MORE THAN I ALREADY DO
AH!
WHAT RIGHT DO YOU HAVE TO COMPLAIN IF I CHOOSE TO TORTURE YOU TO DEATH?
YOU SHOT ME AND LEFT ME FOR DEAD!
WHY?

FOR BEING SUCH A SMALL AREA...
I THOUGHT WE'D BE ABLE TO PICK IT OUT EASIER
?!
LOOK THERE! THERE'S SOMEONE--
HEY! THAT'S--!
THEY'RE... THEY'RE DEAD
LOOKS LIKE BULLET WOUNDS

I'LL GIVE YOU THE RING AND THE MAP.
SO LET HIM GO!
HEY, ARE YOU REALLY SURE THIS IS... THE RIGHT PLACE?
THERE'S NO ONE HERE.
THAT'S ODD

YOU KNOW TOO MUCH.
IF YOU WANT TO GET AWAY FROM ME THAT BADLY.. THEN IT'S DEATH FOR YOU
YOU IDIOT!
YOU'LL ONLY GET IN THE WAY!
IF I'M GOING, THEN YOU'RE COMING WITH ME!
THERE'S NO WAY I'M RUNNING AWAY ALONE!
FLORIAN, GET AWAY!
THIS IS NO TIME TO HESITATE!
THE CHOICE IS YOURS, RAY.
RAY!
FLORIAN!
AZURA!

RAY!
!
!
YOU'RE COMING WITH ME.
...DOWN TO THE BOTTOM OF HELL!
AZURA
!
DON'T WORRY.
I'LL COME BACK TO YOU.

I'M GOING DOWN FOR HIM!
WHAT THE HELL?!
RAY!
DAMN IT!
THE ROCKS ARE IN THE WAY! I CAN'T GET A GOOD LOOK!
NO
IT CAN'T BE...
NOIR!

CYCLOPS
BUT...
HE TOLD ME HE'D COME BACK
WELL? DID YOU FIND ANYTHING?
I SEARCHED THE ENTIRE REGION...
I KNOW HE'S STILL ALIVE!
THAT'S IT
THAT'S THE NAME OF THE ISLAND WHERE THE HIDDEN TREASURE OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR IS THE SAME ONE THAT AZURA'S AFTER
IF HE'S ALIVE
...THEN HE'LL DEFINITELY SHOW UP THERE!
AND THERE'S A HIGH CHANCE RAY WILL BE WITH HIM
IT'LL MAKE MORE SENSE TO GO THERE THAN HANG AROUND HERE.

NOIR!
NOIR, WHERE ARE YOU!
IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT
HE WOULDN'T DIE THAT EASILY.
NOIR!

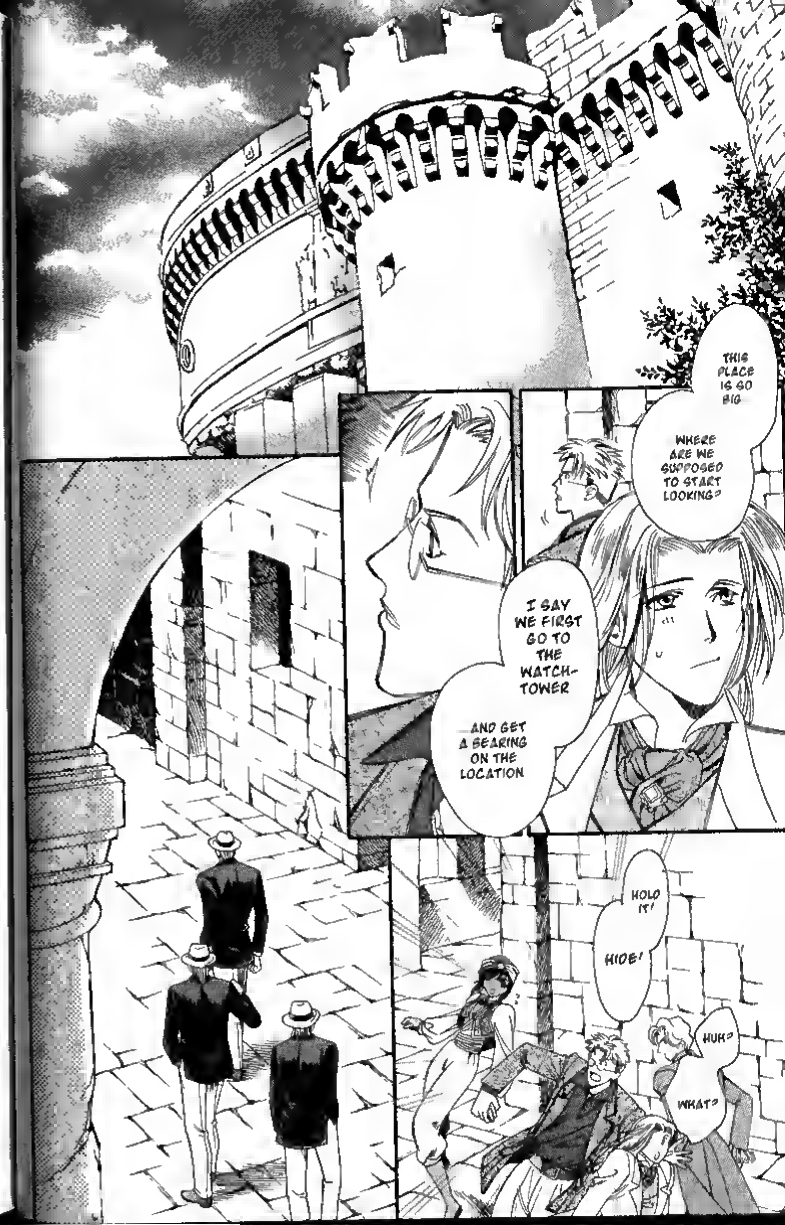
NOIR...YOU TRICKSTER!
SO WE'VE ALREADY MADE IT INTO THE TYRRHENIAN SEA
THAT WAS SOONER THAN EXPECTED
IT'S A BIT FOGGY FROM A DISTANCE, BUT THAT'S THE ISLAND OF SICILY
BEYOND THAT LIES THE MAINLAND OF ITALY

MICHEL!
I'M CERTAIN THERE WAS AN ISLAND OF THAT NAME SOMEWHERE IN THE TYRRHENIAN SEA
I HAVE MOST OF THESE AREAS MEMORIZED
BUT I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THIS ISLAND, CYCLOPS
I'LL PREPARE A SHIP. IT SHOULD ONLY TAKE ABOUT HALF A DAY
YEAH, YEAH, I KNOW
OH
FLORIAN? WHAT'S THE MATTER?
?

THAT'S CYCLOPS ISLAND!
STRANGE
IT FEELS LIKE A FORTIFIED ISLAND THERE'S NOTHING BESIDES THE CASTLE
PEOPLE HAVE COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN THAT IT WAS USED AS A BASE DURING THE CRUSADES
AROUND THE 18TH CENTURY, IT WAS TURNED INTO A STRONGHOLD FOR PIRATES. NOW, THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANYONE LEFT ON THE ISLAND

PROUD
OKAY...
WELL AFTER ALL, THIS IS MY FASTEST SHIP, ENDOWED WITH ONLY THE BEST TECHNOLOGY FROM MY COMPANY
YOU SIMPLY CAN'T COMPARE IT TO ANY OTHER!
THAT'S ODD
There are plenty of seagulls flying around too
WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO SEE IT NOW
HEY!
DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT'S IT?
WHERE? LET ME SEE!
!

WHOA!
SO YOU MEAN
AZURA'S STILL ALIVE?
THEY HAVE TO BE THE BLACK HAND!
WHAT ARE THEY DOING HERE? I THOUGHT THIS PLACE WAS DESERTED
IT IS..
THEY MUST BE AZURA'S HENCHMAN
WHO'S THERE?!
DON'T MOVE!
WE GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE!
THIS IS NO TIME TO BE FIGHTING EACH OTHER!
HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW THIS PLACE WAS FALLING APART?
IT WASN'T MY FAULT!
KLUTZ!
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!


THIS PLACE IS SO BIG
WHERE ARE WE SUPPOSED TO START LOOKING?
I SAY WE FIRST GO TO THE WATCH-TOWER
AND GET A BEARING ON THE LOCATION
HOLD IT!
HIDE!
HUH?
WHAT?

LAILA!
AZURA!
WHERE'S
NOIR?!
UPH!
THIS WAY!
WHOA!
OW
LAILA, ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M OKAY..
OH NO
!

DEAD...
...AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN...
!
LAILA!
BUT LAILA--
NO, FLORIAN!
THOSE TWO ARE GETTING AWAY!
AFTER THEM!
.....!
WE CAN'T LET ALL OF US BE CAP-TURED!
WE HAVE TO RUN!
NOIR... DEAD? IT CAN'T BE...!

THAT VOICE...
WAIT
WHAT'S THE RUSH?
IT'S ME
DON'T TELL ME YOU ALREADY FORGOT
D'OH!
!!
!

HE TOLD ME HE'D COME BACK!
HE SAID HE WOULD!
BUT HOW CAN HE MAKE IT BACK IF HE'S DEAD?!
!
FLORIAN!
ANOTHER ONE OF AZURA'S HENCHMEN IS--
NO!

EEGIDES
I CAN'T DIE UNTIL YOU'VE PAID BACK YOUR DEBT TO ME
I MADE HIM THINK I WAS DEAD...
...SO IT'D BE EASIER FOR ME TO CONCEAL MYSELF AMONG HIS LACKEYS.
There's no getting in once those two are in their own world.
OR...
EXCUSE ME?
DAMN YOU!
HOW COULD I BE WORRIED ABOUT A CREEP LIKE YOU?!
OH, YOU WERE WORRIED FOR ME?
IDIOT!
BUT SERIOUSLY
HOW DID YOU MAKE IT?

IS THAT ANY WAY TO WELCOME ME BACK?
WHY DIDN'T YOU LET US KNOW YOU WERE HERE IMMEDIATELY?
I THOUGHT WE THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!
(C)
YOU DUMMY
THERE'S NO WAY...
...I'D DIE THAT EASILY.

WAIT!
NOT EVEN YOU, FLORIAN.
THIS IS MY PROBLEM.
I WON'T HAVE ANYONE GETTING IN THE WAY
TAKE GOOD CARE OF IT
THAT RING'S OUR LAST TRUMP CARD.
IT WASN'T PART OF MY CALCULATIONS FOR YOU TO FOLLOW ME
DO YOU HAVE THE RING, FLORIAN?
THEN THAT MEANS YOU--
RAY, YOU--
I'LL PUT AN END TO THIS MYSELF
WITH MY OWN TWO HANDS.
DON'T THINK THAT YOU'RE GOING TO GET AWAY WITH THIS, ROMWELL JR.!
I SWEAR I'LL REVEAL YOUR TREACHERY TO THE ENTIRE WORLD!
Shut up!
WHAT DO WE DO, BOSS?
SHALL I OFF HIM?

?!
MASTER AZURA, IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?
THIS MUST BE THE DOOR TO THE TREASURE ROOM!
ACCORDING TO THIS MAP, THERE SHOULD BE A DOOR LEADING TO THE TREASURE SOMEWHERE IN THESE UNDERGROUND ROOMS
GET WALKING!
WE CAN KILL THEM OFF ANYTIME
LET THEM LIVE A LITTLE LONGER
NO, THEY'LL BE THE PERFECT BAIT TO LURE OUT THE RAT.
THEN, BEYOND THAT..
THE PILLAR OF JACHIN, AND THE PILLAR OF BOAZ.
JUST LIKE THE HOLY TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM.

RAY!
I KNEW ALL ALONG THAT YOU'D SLIPPED INTO MY BAND OF HENCHMEN
ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME YOU DROP THE ACT?
YOU MADE ME LOOK LIKE A FOOL WITH THAT FAKE!
AND YOUR BOSS IS MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN I THOUGHT
TRICKING ME LIKE THAT

HEH
HA HA HA...
WH--
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
IF YOU'RE GOING TO KILL US, THEN HURRY UP AND GET IT OVER WITH!
BRING THOSE TWO HERE!
LAILA!
YOU'VE GOT GUTS, GIRL

NOW GET OUT OF HERE!
I'LL DEAL WITH THE REST!
IM-PRESSIVE, AZURA
SO YOU SAW THROUGH ME THE WHOLE TIME?
NO!
URGH
NOIR!
YOU'RE ALIVE!
I'M GOING TO SHOOT OFF THE ROPE WITH THE GUN
LAILA, TURN AROUND

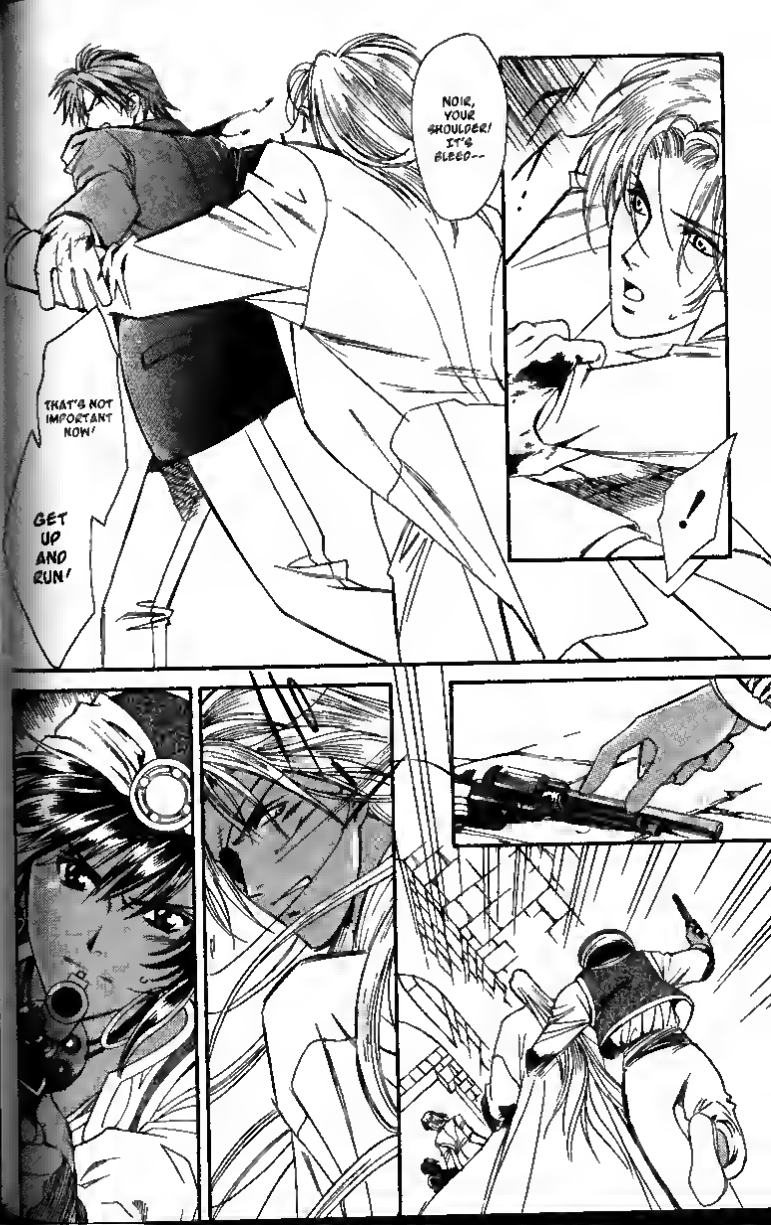
OH!
!
DAMN!
CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR
NOW BE A GOOD BOY
AND HAND OVER THE REAL RING
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME! JUST GET OUT OF HERE!
DAMN IT!

!
THAT IDIOT! HOW COULD HE BE SO RECKLESS?!
IF YOU DON'T, THEN I'LL DROP IT!
I DOUBT YOU'LL EVER FIND IT IF IT FALLS FROM THIS HEIGHT!

!
FLORIAN!
I HAVE THE RING RIGHT HERE!
IF YOU WANT THE RING, THEN FREE THEM!

GET BACK!
FLORIAN!
HUH?!
WHAT--?
AH!
HEH... HEH HEH HEH
HEY!
UNDO MY ROPES TOO!
LAILA!
UOH!
MASTER AZUR--!

TURN IT SO THAT THE RING'S RELIEF FITS INTO THE HOLE CORRECTLY!
HURRY!
MY HAND IT SLIPPED!
H--
HERE?
PUT THE RING IN THAT HOLE!
THE RING
IT'S A DEAD END!
IT'S OPENING!
RUMBLE
ゴゴゴゴゴ


NOIR, YOUR SHOULDER! IT'S BLEED--
!
THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT NOW!
GET UP AND RUN!

AH
THE DOOR'S CLOSING AGAIN!
IT'S ALL OR NOTHING NOW!
!
LAILA!
HEY! WAIT!
!
WHOA!

FLORIAN!
!
BUT...
DIDN'T I TEACH YOU, RAY...
...NEVER TO LET YOUR GUARD DOWN?
ERGH!
AH!

LAILA!
DAMN IT!
IT WON'T BUDGE!
MM...
SO THIS IS WHAT IS...
...BEYOND THE DOOR
ERGH
WE HAVE TO...
...TAKE CARE OF THAT WOUND
IT'S NOTHING
YOU WORRY TOO MUCH

STOP IT!
OUT OF MY WAY!
LET FLORIAN GO!
HOW DARE YOU OPPOSE ME, RAY?!
FLORIAN!

NO
I'M STARTING TO LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS
AH!
DAMN IT. I MISSED!
NO!

USH!
NOW, DIE AS YOU CURSE YOUR OWN..
HELP-LESS-NESS

THAT HURT, YOU JERK!
UGH...
HM?
UH..
LAILA!
AAH!
DON'T COME ANY CLOSER, NOIR!
NO!
RAUSH!

I CAN'T BELIEVE THE WHOLE THING BUSTED OPEN WITH A SINGLE KICK!
AFTER TOO YEARS OF BEING EXPOSED TO THE SEA AIR...
YOU HAVE TO EXPECT THAT IT'D DECAY
MORE IMPORTANTLY, LET'S GET GOING...
I THINK I HEARD A GUNSHOT.
I HOPE LAILA'S ALL RIGHT

NO!--
!
NO_!
WHOA!

HEY! IS EVERY-ONE ALL RIGHT?!
NNGH
ERGH..
AZURA, WAIT!

YOU'RE AN INCREDIBLY BRAVE GIRL
I THINK IT'S WONDERFUL THAT YOU'RE ABLE TO RISK YOUR LIFE FOR THE MAN YOU ADMIRE
FLORIAN!
LAILA, ARE YOU HURT?
I'M OKAY
JUST NICKED MY FOOT
UGH
DAMN IT
LAILA?
I'M SUPPOSED TO BE ONE OF HIS HELPERS
BUT I ONLY GET IN THE WAY
HMPH
YOU PROBABLY THINK I'M PATHETIC

WH-WHAT?!
?!
THE TREASURE ROOM
WE'LL SOON BE AT THE LAST SEAL OF—
IT WON'T BE LONG NOW
WHAT DOES IT MATTER ANYMORE?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
THE CEILING'S LOWERING!
SOME SORT OF MECHANISM THAT'S AUTOMATICALLY TRIGGERED WHEN SOMEONE ENTERS IT
IT MUST BE IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE TREASURE

YOU—
WHY DO YOU CARE ABOUT THE TREASURE SO MUCH? IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY, IS IT?
HMPH
WHO KNOWS?
ANSWER ME.
THERE IS SOME-ONE—
WHO WANTS IT MORE THAN ANYTHING
?!
WAIT! WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!
AND THERE'S NO WAY I CAN OPPOSE HIM

!
I COULDN'T LEAVE YOU BEHIND WHEN YOU'RE INJURED
WHATEVER! BUT LEND ME AN ARM, WOULD YOU?
Ahem!
SURE THING!

FLORIAN!
?!
ONE SECOND LATER, AND YOU'D BEEN SQUISHED LIKE A PANCAKE!
WHY, YOU!
STOP BEING SO CARELESS!
THAT WAS A CLOSE ONE.

HA
HA
HA
HA!
HA...
HA...
I'VE FINALLY FOUND IT. THE LOST TREASURE OF THE HOLY TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM!

RAY!
THE WALLS! WATER'S BURSTING IN FROM THE CRACKS!
I'VE GOTTEN WHAT I CAME FOR
NOW I HAVE NO MORE USE FOR YOU
I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MUCH TREASURE IN MY LIFE
THIS IS THE LOST TREASURE OF JERUSALEM FROM OVER 2000 YEARS AGO
WHA ?
WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

BEFORE LONG, THIS ENTIRE PLACE WILL BE SUBMERGED IN WATER
IT'S THE STRONGHOLD'S LAST DEFENSE AGAINST INTRUDERS
BUT THE ONLY ONE THAT IS ALLOWED TO LIVE...
...IS HE WHO CARRIES THE RING.
BUT I'LL GIVE YOU ONE LAST CHANCE
THROW AWAY THE KID AND JOIN MY SIDE
IT'S YOUR ONLY CHANCE OF LIVING THROUGH THIS
IN THAT CAGE
...YOU BETTER GET GOING
GOODBYE, AZURA
NOIR! DON'T DO IT!
I'M THE ONE WHO CAME ON MY OWN! YOU DON'T HAVE TO--
!

THEN, DO AS YOU PLEASE
ENJOY YOUR DOUBLE SUICIDE WITH HIM
YOU TRY NOT TO DIE ON YOUR WAY OUT THE DOOR EITHER
NO! THE DOOR!

!!
YOU'VE GOT TO PUT A CLAMP ON THAT MOUTH OF YOURS
WH-WHAT'D YOU DO THAT FOR?!
SORRY, BUT I'M NOT PATHETIC ENOUGH TO LET HIM DIE HERE
I NEVER KNEW YOU WERE SUCH A FOOL

AS LONG AS WE HAVE A CHANCE...
...I'M GOING TO DO WHATEVER I CAN, EVEN IF YOU THINK IT'S A WASTE
I'D RATHER DO IT THIS WAY THAN REGRET IT LATER!
YOU'RE LOSING A LOT OF BLOOD!
TAKE YOUR JACKET OFF I HAVE TO STOP THE BLEEDING
WHAT DOES IT MATTER IF I'M BLEEDING? WE'RE BOTH GOING TO DROWN HERE ANYWAY...
YOU IDIOT HOW CAN YOU REGRET ANYTHING WHEN YOU'RE DEAD?

WHY?!
THAT WAS YOUR ONLY CHANCE TO SURVIVE!
!
?!
HEY!
HANG IN THERE, NOIR!
NN
SORRY I WAS JUST RESTING MY EYES

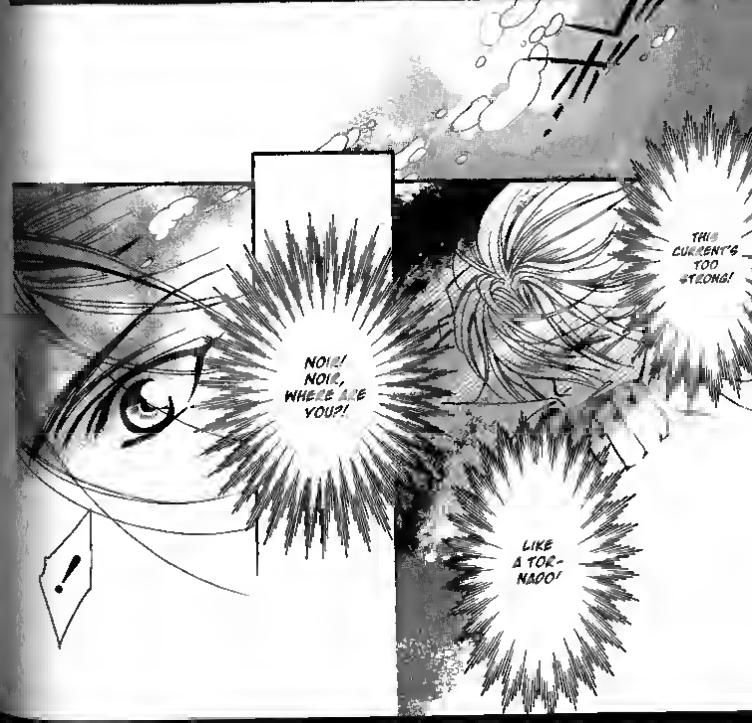
WHAT ON EARTH IS GOING ON IN THERE?!
RAY! FLORIAN!
WATER?!
HURR
HURR

FLORIAN.
YOUR AMETHYST EYES...
...REALLY ARE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING.
MORE THAN... ANY TREASURE HERE.

HA HA HA!
THE CHALICE THAT HELD JESUS CHRIST'S BLOOD!
THE SYMBOL OF ULTIMATE POWER!
PEOPLE CALL IT THE HOLY GRAIL!
AND HE WHO HOLDS IT IN HIS HAND GAINS ULTIMATE POWER!
HA
HA HA HA!
HAAA HA HA HA HA!
I'VE FINALLY GOT IT!
THE TRUE TREASURE OF THE HOLY TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM!
WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY TO THAT?!
HOW FOOLISH...
EVEN IF IT DID POSSES THE POWER OF GOD, I DON'T NEED IT
I'LL SEIZE THIS WORLD ON MY OWN!

NOIR!

THAT IS MY...
...MEAGER REVENGE AGAINST MY FATE


NOIR! NOIR, WHERE ARE YOU?!
!
THIS CURRENT'S TOO STRONG!
LIKE A TORNADO!

EVEN IF...
...IT COSTS ME MY LIFE!
PUFF
TOO HEAVY I CAN'T PULL HIM UP
I WON'T LET YOU DIE!
WHOA!

WHERE AM I?!
!
THE SOUND OF THE TIDE...
...!
OW!
FLORIAN, WHERE ARE--
FLORIAN?
!

OH...
IT'S ALMOST LIKE I'M BEING PULLED INTO THE LIGHT...
THE JEWELS ARE GLITTERING SO BEAUTIFULLY...

THE WATER...
IT'S REFLECTING THE LIGHT LIKE A BRILLIANT BLUE GEM!
TAKE A LOOK.
ISN'T IT AMAZING?

UH...
HM?
FLORIAN!
THANK GOD, HE'S ALIVE!
N-NOIR!
HEY. YOU AWAKE?
WE'RE SAVED.
BUT HOW...
THE LIME-STONE HAD ALREADY TURNED BRITTLE
. AND COULON'T HOLD IN THE POWER OF THE WATER.
LOOKS LIKE IT BUSTED DOWN THE WALLS AND CARRIED US OUT HERE

Naples
ニョルーン
HEY, I'M INJURED HERE I NEED TO GET MY ENERGY BACK
HEY! YOU TOOK ALL THE CLAM, LAILA!
Nom nom
WHAT ARE YOU GUYS DOING?
SO..
..ABOUT AZURA
RIGHT
WE SEARCHED THE ISLAND ALL OVER, BUT FOUND NO TRACE OF HIM
WE ALSO COULDN'T FIND THE SHIP HE'D ARRIVED ON WHICH MEANS

It's just the diffused light obviously!
REALLY? THAT'S AMAZING!
ER
DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING I SAY!
THE OCEAN'S SWALLOWED THE JERUSALEM TREASURE
AND NOW IT'S BEING ABSORBED BY GOO
BUT WHY...?
I THINK THIS GEM..
..IS A LITTLE TOO BIG TO FIT IN MY COLLECTION

LAILA?
!!
WHY, THAT TWO-FACED DETECTIVE!
I CAN'T BELIEVE HIM!
JUST KIDDING
Ciao
HUH?
NO, BUT--
I'LL THINK ABOUT IT
N-NO ONE AT ALL!
WHO'S "NOIR"?
I'M SURE IT'D BE MARVELOUS WITH YOU.
LET'S GO ON A CRUISE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA
LISTEN, LAILA ONCE YOUR FOOT HEALS

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
I'VE STILL GOT SOME THINGS I NEED TO LOOK INTO
Thanks for the pizza.
WE CAN'T JUMP TO ANY CONCLUSIONS YET
HE MIGHT STILL BE ALIVE
YOU SURE ARE ONE BIG MYSTERY
!
AND, LAILA?
BE MORE CAREFUL YOU WERE CALLING HIM "NOIR" EARLIER
The whole time
HA

!
WELL, IT WAS SO BEAUTIFUL, I COULDN'T HELP BUT PICK IT UP.
IT'S BLUE, SO DO YOU SUPPOSE IT'S A SAPPHIRE? I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THESE THINGS.
HOW DID YOU--
But it's so pretty
REALLY?
IT WON'T HELP AT ALL?
THINK OF IT AS A KEEPSAKE.
YOU HOLD ON TO IT.
THAT LITTLE THING WON'T DO US ANY GOOD.
AND THE TREASURE'S AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN-- WHAT A BAD STROKE OF LUCK.
THIS TIME, I'VE GREATLY INDEBTED MYSELF TO MICHEL.
First I'm shot, then almost drown
LET 'EM DO WHAT THEY WANT
I THINK THERE'S SOMETHING GOING ON BETWEEN THOSE TWO
UH, NOIR?
WILL THIS BE OF ANY HELP?
!

WHEN YOU HOLD IT UP TO THE LIGHT AND LOOK THROUGH IT THIS WAY..
IT ALMOST RESEMBLES...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
And stop showing it off in front of everyone
I'LL BE...
HEADING TO MY ROOM NOW.
Me too!
...THE GLITTERING BLUE SEA...
...WE SAW IN THE CAVE

MAYBE...
...THE HOLY TREASURE IS SLEEPING SOMEWHERE WITHIN IT.
YEAH...
IT MUST BE

THAT'S A BLUE DIAMOND, RIGHT?
YOU DON'T FIND ONES AS BIG AS THAT EVERY DAY, YOU KNOW IT'S SECOND ONLY TO THE HUGE HOPE DIAMOND I ONCE SAW.
ITS VALUE MUST BE--
THAT'S ENOUGH
HUH?
!
HEY, WAIT!

Scoundrel
DON'T TELL FLORIAN THAT.
NOT UNLESS YOU WANT ME TO GO BLAB TO LAILA ALL THE MISTAKES YOU'VE MADE IN THE PAST.
WITH THAT ONE DIAMOND, FLORIAN COULD BUY HIS FREEDOM
THAT'S WHY I CAN'T TELL HIM!
RAY!
YOU SNEAKY BASTARD!

Sorry for the long wait! With this, Gorgeous Carat's Maghreb are finally comes to an end. I had a lot of help for most of it, so I managed to somehow complete it. And I can't believe I did 141 pages of extra work! The release date rolled around two or three times, so I'd like to apologize to all my readers who were eagerly awaiting this book.

Now that this work is finished, I feel like I can sit back and think how much harder it was than I'd originally anticipated. But I also consider it my shining gem of work since I first started writing comics... There was a time there where I felt like no matter how much I wrote the end would never come!

But I have to first thank my loyal editors who, despite the voices of my readers who told me that they were looking forward to the book, had to keep pushing back the release date. Through all this, their patience persevered, and they still managed to run all over the place to get things finished up. Thank you N-Hara-sama. And also to my two favorite Princess Assistants, who had to stay under house arrest due to their crazy schedules. It was all thanks to their support that I was able to finish this work.

I'm really glad that I was able to build up the plot to a shocking climax. I know I'm repeating myself here, but I really have to thank my readers again for this. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

And so, Gorgeous Carat: Virtue of Darkness comes to an end, but next up you can look forward to Gorgeous Carat Galaxy coming out in Fall of 2002, with Gentosha Comics. It's planned to be released in their new magazine, Mystery B-street.

Please consider looking into the continuation of the series, everyone. And I hope to see you all here again next time!

September, 2002 You Higuri

This is the wonderful stamp that my editor carved for me. Thank you so much!

Special Thanks

Izumi Hijiri-san, Naoko Nakatsuji-san, Miyakoshi Wagusa-san, Fuyutsuki Mitsuru-san, Yoshiteru Moto-san, Akiko Murakami-san, Neren Mitsurugi-san, Mari Kazuki-san, Hondou Makoto-san, Kuro Takedamaru-san, YasukoWakimura-san, Sho Akatsuki-san, Oda Ryoka (Chief)

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GORGEOUS CARAT VOL. 4
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ISBN: 978-1-59816-105-2

First Printing February 2007
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Printed in the USA